

ICCR President Dr Karan Singh calls for making museums interactive



New Delhi, Nov, 28 (DIM News) : Music is “eternal and divine” and has been ascribed with magical qualities, ICCR President Dr. Karan Singh today said, making a strong case for preservation of Asia’s glorious musical traditions.

“Exploring music through Goddess Sarasvati and the way it has travelled in various parts of Southeast Asia is quite fascinating and a great joy,” said Dr Singh, while inaugurating an exhibition at National Museum.

A sublime convergence of technology and culture, the pioneering multimedia interactive installation, “Musical Landscapes & The Goddess of Music: Recent Advances in Interactive Art”, explores music in its scientific, artistic and spiritual dimensions and its reflections in the Goddess images across Asian cultures.

Dr Singh, a member of the Rajya Sabha, complimented the museum and its Director General, Dr Venu V, for organising the pioneering exhibition and thereby breaking away from the traditional structures and entering a new terrain. A Museum is not merely a place for the exhibit of ancient artefacts; it has to be interactive also,” he said.

“The exhibition takes viewers into the world of exquisite Asian music through electronic installations, digital images, sculptures and recordings of performances by masters,” said Ranjit

Makkuni, an internationally acclaimed multimedia designer and accomplished musician who has mounted the innovative art show at the National Museum here.

“It is an intriguing and fascinating show, combining of art and technology to create an exploration into Asian musical traditions,” said Dr Venu. “The project demonstrates a synthesis of technology and culture, of modern and traditional, of physical and virtual. We believe that National Museum should create spaces for such intersections”, he added.

The exhibition showcases both traditional and new instruments based on Indian Sitar, Burmese Saung Harp, Thai Xylophone, Korean Kayagum, Chinese Guzheng and Pipa, Vietnamese Dan Tranh, Javanese and Balinese Gamelan, and how these instruments have a divine connection.

The artist has embedded new instruments with computation, allowing viewers to interact through gesture, touch, pull, movement and gaze in the exhibition environment. For instance, there is a sculpture, Abstract Woman. Embedded in the waist of the sculpture is a representation of Sri Yantra, which, upon touch, plays back the 1000 names of Goddess Lalita.

“Through my work, I have tried to demonstrate that it is possible to develop culture-friendly technologies, which can become a vehicle for preserving cultural identity, not replacing it, and how the wisdom of the past can be made accessible to people,” said Makkuni, an alumnus of IIT, Kharagpur and University of California Los Angeles (UCLA).

The exhibition combines visual splendour, aesthetics and technology, the attributes that define the work of the multimedia artist. As the director of New Delhi-based e design think tank, Sacred World Research Laboratory, Makkuni is engaged in pioneering new applications in culturally rooted computing design.

The exhibition comprises several sections, such as Goddesses of Music and their Iconic Transformations; forms and sculptures suggestive of the scientific and mythological imagery of sound; and the compassionate Goddesses who listen to people’s prayers. There are sections on Goddess Sarasvati, the goddess of wisdom and music; Kinayi, the Angels of Music, from Burma; and The Compassionate figure of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara from Japan. There is also a section on Breath, Voice and Healing, which explores the healing properties of singing and its relationship to breath.

“I try to explore innovative ways of building bridges between techno and traditional cultures. I believe engagement with culture is a valuable process to spark off technological innovation. My works show that the wisdom of traditional communities can positively negate the homogenizing aesthetics of modern media technology and help inspire new forms of indigenous information access devices,” said the artist, whose works have been displayed at leading museums and won top international awards for promoting culture, peace and environmental protection.

The exhibition will be on display till 15 January 2014.
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